

**Advent Lutheran Church: Censorship – 5<sup>th</sup> Letter – December 5, 2011**

To: Advent Lutheran Congregational Council  
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Date: December 5, 2011

Ladies and Gentlemen of our Church Council:

This is the **fifth letter in a series** addressing **Council's censorship of non-exempt material** and the controversy growing out of it. It is my intent, by posting this on the Internet, to show that there is a process by which a lone church member can hold officers accountable, and especially so when the process has been hijacked by those who control it.

**Constitutional basis for remedy by lone church member:**

In this letter I will address the constitutional basis for a church member's remedy against council officers who deviate from what is required.

I refer to Advent's Constitution, Chapter 5, POWERS OF THE CONGREGATION, C5.03:

“Only such authority as is delegated to the Congregation Council or other organizational units in the congregation's governing documents is recognized. All remaining authority is retained by the congregation.”

There is a way for any church member, on his own, to address arbitrary exertions of power. No church member at Advent have not conveyed away his authority to:

- (1) access information,
- (2) address Congregational Council in it public agenda, and
- (3) bring about public attention when 1 and 2 are impeded.

Though this specific remedy by a church member is not set out in Advent's governing document, neither is it prohibited. As such authority has been retained by this Congregation under C5.03, any member has the authority to pursue this remedy against Council officers, as I have chosen to do. It would be niggardly of Council to charge a church member under Chapter 15 and couch his actions as described above (1, 2, or 3) as “misconduct” or “persistent trouble-making.”

### **Council officers have created the need for the remedy:**

It is ironical that Council officers now complain about the remedy that I am using, after they created the need for it. Council officers have circumvented and hijacked the process. Council officers are hiding behind the corporate personhood of Council (board of directors), and are using their positions against a lone church member who has the audacity and tenacity to pursue this matter. When the process has been stolen, remedies become scarce. I have been rather patient in exhausting what puny options or remedies have been available to me.

### **Difficulty of pursuing remedy against Council:**

The logistics, or the management of the details, of our governing document (Constitution & Bylaws) makes it extremely difficult for a member of the Congregation to pursue reconciliation against officers of Council. The management of the details of such an operation in an analogous way to **C15.01** is hard to accomplish for the following reasons:

- (1) Subpart (a) requires “private admonition by the pastor,” which is a remote possibility since the pastor is a subordinate of Council.
- (2) Subpart (b) requires “admonition by the pastor in the presence of two or three witnesses,” which is remote for obvious reasons.
- (3) Subpart (c) requires “citation to appear before the Congregation Council,” which is a ridiculous scenario, as this would amount to Council officers appearing before themselves.

Let us take a look at **Matthew 18:15-17** says:

**15** “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their **fault**, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. **16** But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ **17** If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

In a rudimentary way I have attempted to follow **C15.01** and **Matthew 18:15-17**: (1) I have privately tried to goad Council into releasing information. (2) It is not possible to “take one or two others along” for obvious reasons. (3) After being patient, I “[told] it to the church” with open letters to Council. (4) I have no desire to “treat [Council officers] as [I] would a pagan or a tax collector,” as I like our Council officers in spite of this controversy and I want them to be treated with respect.

In a similar manner as Council has authority to embarrass a church member before the Congregation Council with allegations under C15.01(c), I have taken the liberty of embarrassing Council officers before the Congregation with my open material. What is good for the goose is good for the oligarchical gander. There is an old proverb: If the shoe fits wear it and if the truth hurts bear it. If any Council officers, or anyone for that matter, have suffered embarrassment as a result of my open letters, they are probably those whom it fits the best.

### **A bit of levity**

Dealing with any controversy is always easier when levity is added. Here is a good rockabilly and inspirational song, **rockabilly HILLBILLY CATS Long Black Train .wmv** < <http://youtu.be/ry5bxvmS7bk> />.

In light of Council's failure to provide an explanation for its censorship of non-exempt material, I looked for an explanation elsewhere. I believe I found one. An editor for *The Redneck Lutheran Lowdown* had an interview with a church leader of another Lutheran church about a similar censorship problem. It might be instructive in our present controversy. The interview follows.

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## The Redneck Lutheran Lowdown

Interview with Chummy Editor and Otto Autocrat, councilmember of the Hardcore Lutheran Church.



Chummy Editor



Otto Autocrat

- Chummy: Hi there, Otto.
- Otto: Hellow, Chummy.
- Chummy: Let's talk about your Constitution and Bylaws.
- Otto: What about 'em?
- Chummy: Can a church member have an e-copy of it?
- Otto: We made the mistake of giving an e-copy to one member, and that scoundrel posted it on his own durn-website. Now we can't get the guy to shut down the website. It's a real embarrassment. So, no. We don't give out much.
- Chummy: What's so bad about being open with your congregation?
- Otto: We've got our own way of doing things. Our practice is a time-honored tradition. We've had it for generations.
- Chummy: I know how important unwritten religious and moral precepts can be. Why that's almost as important as the stones Moses brought back from the mountain.
- Otto: You've got that right. Time-honored practices are things that people should not question. Some our autocratic practices date back to the time of Sir William Jones.
- Chummy: Otto, what is the secret history of Hardcore's missing documents?
- Otto: There's really no secret to it. Us cronies don't deny what we're doing. We release very few documents to the Congregation. It's no secret.
- Chummy: Do some church members want more?
- Otto: We might have a few intermeddlers. But they don't matter. We satisfy the great majority.
- Chummy: Well, how do you keep those few intermeddlers from getting their grubby paws on your material? That's got to be high priority.

Otto: We put 'em through so many hoops that they just give up. Make it confusin'. Wear 'em down. Make it intimidatin'.

Chummy: That's a terrific idea. If people don't have a clue how to exert their authority and demand stuff, they'll never get around to it. Otto, you're so slick.

Otto: Us cronies are walking examples of rational minds at work, drawing conceptual distinctions, analyzing claims, producing and refutin' arguments, and then spoon-feedin' the results to church members.

Chummy: That's amazing. I am amazed that the principles of cronyhood and the tie-in with religion.

Otto: We don't call ourselves cronies for naught.

Chummy: Do you consider yourself a social reformer?

Otto: As a matter of fact, I do. I work to protect our church environment from intermeddlers.

Chummy: I see a constant yin and yang at Hardcore ... you cronies and some intermeddlers ... your non-exempt documents and keeping 'em secret ... the yin and yang of censorship.

Otto: Yinging and yanging is just part of the job. Put some ying in your yang. You'll feel a lot better.

Chummy: Otto, do run-of-the-mill church members ever make an intellectual contribution?

Otto: Chummy, on rare occasions someone might have an intermittent interlude of wisdom. Generally though it's us cronies that makes decisions. And if you're not a decision-maker, there's no need for you to expend time looking at corporate documents.

Chummy: How would looking at papers be bad for Hardcore's purpose or mission?

Otto: It would expend a portion of the congregation's time that could be better spent earning money. And I'm an ecologist and I hate to see paper wasted.

Chummy: Well, what about e-copies that do not use paper?

Otto: The same goes for electricity. I'd hate to see a good dead dinosaur to go to waste. We want to cut down on politics, arguing, and needless questions.

Chummy: You are such an ecologist. You have it down to a fine art. It looks like we are out of time again. Before you go, can you give us a song for the occasion?

Otto: Yep. Us cronies is inti-lekshual geniuses and we don't need no help running things. We just need folks stayin' in their places and leavin' it to us cronies. For a good analog here visit the **Carlisles, No Help Wanted**, < <http://youtu.be/7KtBwLgpAMI> />.

Chummy: Thanks for coming in. Bye for now.

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